

Ruth The Moabitess

RUTH

Text:

This morning I would like to share with you once again another Biblical story. For all of you ladies I am sure it will be to your liking. It's a love story. Now before all of you men tune me out let me hasten to add that this is not one of those love stories such as Peyton Place, so I think that perhaps you may enjoy it too. This is a true story and this is probably what makes it that much more interesting. The story is the story of Ruth. Again, maybe most of you have heard it or read it, but it is one of those tales that never grows old in the telling. And once again I say that if you have not read this story either, then make a point of reading it sometime in the near future. It is only four short chapters, and will not require much time to read. For my background I am using the Jerusalem Bible.

The story starts out with the statement that in the days of the judges a famine came to the land and a certain man from Bethlehem of Judah went with his wife and two sons to live in the land of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech. His wife was called Naomi and his sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They settled in the land of Moab, and shortly thereafter Elimelech died. The two sons married Moab women. Mahlon was married to Ruth and Chilion to Orpah. They lived there about ten years and then both of the sons died, leaving Naomi to mourn not only her husband but two sons as well. So Naomi and her daughters in law prepared to return to their homeland. So altogether they started back to Judah. When they had started out Naomi had told the two daughters in law that they should return to the homes of their mother. Naomi said to them, "May God be kind to you as you have been to those who have died and to me. God grant that you find rest, each of you, in the house of a husband. And she kissed them." But they cried aloud and said, "No we will go back with you to your people." But Naomi argued with them and said, "You must return my daughters, why come with me? Have I any more sons to make husbands for you? I am too old to marry, and even if I were to marry this very night and bear sons, would you be prepared to wait until they were grown up? Would you refuse to marry for this? No my daughters, I should then be deeply

grieved for you, for the hand of God has been raised against me." And once more they began to weep. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and went back to her people. But Ruth clung to her.

Naomi said to her, "Look you! sister-in-law has gone back to her God. You must return too, follow your sister-in-law." But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you and to turn back from your company, for wherever you go, I will go, wherever you live, I will live. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Wherever you die, I will die and there I will be buried. May God do this thing to me and more also, if even death should come between us." At this Naomi saw that Ruth was determined and so she said no more. The two of them traveled until they came again to the town of Bethlehem. When they arrived they caused quite a stir. All the women said, "Can this be Naomi?" But she told them not to call her Naomi, but Mara instead. Now Mara means the bitter one and Naomi means My fair one. They arrived in Bethlehem at the time of the Barley harvest.

Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side who was well to do, and of Elimelech's clan. His name was Boaz. Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go into the fields and glean among the ears of corn in the footsteps of some man who will look on me with favor." This was the custom according to the law. The poor were permitted to come behind those who were harvesting, and whatever was left could be picked up by the poor. But the exercise of this privilege depended on the good will of the owner of the property. So Naomi told her to go and by chance she came to the part of the fields that belonged to Boaz. Boaz had just come from Bethlehem and he greeted the reapers with the greeting, "Yahweh be with you, or God be with you," and the reapers replied, "Yahweh be with you." Then Boaz happened to notice Ruth and he asked one of his servants to whom she belonged. And the servant informed him that this was Ruth the Moabitess who returned with Naomi from Moab. And the servant told him that Ruth had come to him and asked, "Please let me glean of corn and gather the ears after the reapers." So she came and has been on her feet from morning until now. So Boaz spoke to Ruth and told her that she was not to glean in any other field, and that she was to stay near his servants. He told her to keep

her eyes on whatever part of the field they were harvesting and to follow behind. He told her that he had given his servants orders that it was all right for her to glean in his fields, and that if she became thirsty she was to go to the pitchers and drink the water that his servants had drawn. At this Ruth fell on her face and bowing to the ground she asked, "How is it that I have so earned your favor that you take notice of me, even though I am a foreigner?" And Boaz answered, "I have been told all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you left your own mother and father and the land you were born in and came to a strange land and have come to live among strange people whom you knew nothing about. May God bless you for what you have done." And Ruth said, "May I find favor in your sight, my lord, since you have given me courage and spoken kindly to your maidservant though I am not equal to one of your maidservants."

Then when it was time to eat, Boaz told her to sit down and share the food of the other reapers. When she got up to glean again Boaz gave his servants orders that they should let her glean among the sheaves by herself and to take some ears out of the bundles and let them fall where she might find them. So she gleaned in the fields until evening and when she had beaten out what she had gleaned it amounted to an Ephah of barley. Which is about one and a quarter bushel. Then taking it with her she returned to town and gave it to her mother-in-law. Naomi wanted to know where she had been and what farmers fields she had worked in. When Ruth told her that it was Boaz, Naomi informed Ruth that Boaz was a relative of theirs. Now the custom of the Jews was that it was the duty of a deceased mans closest relative to marry his widow and to raise up children for him. This was called the right of redemption. However Boaz was not the closest relative, but that is getting ahead of our story.

Now Naomi was sort of playing cupid and she saw the chance to have things work out favorably between Boaz and Ruth. So she informed Ruth that Boaz would be winnowing the barley at the threshing floor and it was the custom at this time for a single girl to wait until the men ~~to~~ finish eating and drinking after the winnowing was done and then when the men had laid down to sleep,

the girl would turn back the covering on the feet of the man of her choice and lie there, keeping him warm. Ruth did this and in the middle of the night Boaz awoke and asked who it was at his feet. Ruth replied, "I am your maidservant, Ruth." Boaz told her that God should bless her since the kindness of her heart was greater than anything she had ever done, since she could have gone after a much younger man but chose Boaz instead. He told her that although he had the right of redemption over her, he was not the closest relative, but he would try to see what he could do. Ruth slept at the feet of Boaz until morning, when he awoke and arose before the hour when one man can recognise another and left. He didn't want anyone to know that she had come to the threshing floor. Then he told her to hold out the cloak she was wearing and he filled it with six measures of barley for her to take back home to Naomi. When Ruth returned she gave the barley to Naomi and told her what had happened.

Now Boaz went to the gate of the town and sat down. The closest relative happened to come by and he told him to sit down. Then he picked out ten of the town elders to be witnesses to the transaction he proposed. He told the relative that Naomi wanted to sell the land which belonged to their kinsmen Elimelech and since he was the closest relative he had the right of redemption. The relative said he wanted to buy it. Then Boaz continued, that when he bought the land he also purchased Ruth the dead man's widow. Now this is the strange part of the transaction. Although Ruth was the widow of Mahlon, Elimelech's son, Mahlon did not count and she was actually considered as the widow of Elimelech. This was done so that the man's name, in this case Elimelech, was restored to his inheritance. The relative replied that if he had to purchase Ruth as well as the land then he could not exercise his right of redemption. Then Boaz said to the elders that they were witnesses that he was buying the land and buying Ruth as well. He said, "That you are witnesses that I buy Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow to be my wife, to keep the name of the dead man in his inheritance that his name may not die out among his brothers and at the gate of this town." They answered we are witnesses. So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. And we are told that she conceived and bore a son. The women of the neighborhood gave this

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a name, and they called him Obed. This was the father of David's father Jesse.

This story has two basic points which I feel are the main points about the entire story. The first is that a stranger can come into the midst of a strange people and accept them as her own people. This is what Ruth did. Now what is so great about this? Isn't this pretty much how the Christian ministry is? A strange man comes into a group of strangers to him, and through working with these people he gradually comes to love them and to accept them as his people. He learns to share their laughter, their tears, their sorrows, their happiness, their joy and all others things in common with them. I can truthfully say that this happens because it has happened to me. This is a joy that cannot be explained and it is certainly a wonderful thing. Some people have said that I don't seem to be a stranger here at all, that I seem to fit in as though I were a long time native or resident here. This can only be true I feel because we have been able to meet with mutual love and trust. We have been able to share this Christian experience which to me is very dear. It is only when we can meet on common ground that this ^{is} able to take place. This is where the familiar theme of the book of Ruth is brought into focus. Your people shall be my people and your God my God. This ^{is} the heart and the core of a group called a congregation and the man who is their pastor, whether he be minister or layman.

Then the other point is the very main one of this story. It concerns a mystery of God. The very last verse tells us that the son, who was named Obed, which means servant, was the father of Jesse who in turn was the father of David. Now in case you have missed the implication, this means that from Ruth the Son of God Jesus Christ descended. The story of the birth of Jesus tells us that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem for the census because Joseph was of the house and line of David. The true wonder of the story of Ruth is the fact that God chose a foreigner to be the ancestress of Christ. So here again we encounter the strange ways that God uses people to work His purpose out. Who would think or believe that a foreigner from Moab would marry into the Hebrew religion, become a member of it, and through the children born of this marriage become part

St. John's Emerton 11:00 7/21/68

Prelude

*Processional Hymn 43

*Call to Worship Page 194

*Confession of Sin

* Assurance of Pardon

Responsive Reading JEL 67-14, 614

Hymn 73

Scripture 2 TIM 3:14-17 & 4:1-5

*Gloria Patri

*Apostles Creed

*Pastoral Prayer & Response

Anthem

Announcements

UNITED SERVICES FOR AUGUST

CHURCHES OF EMERTON BILLY

WHITE WATER FUNERAL GRAHAM

Offering, & Prayer

*Hymn 262

Sermon

Prayer & Lord's Prayer

*Hymn 467

*Benediction

Threefold Amen

*Postlude

Salem Lamartine 9:30 7/21/68

Prelude

*Processional Hymn 271

*Call to Worship Page 194

*Confession of Sin

* Assurance of Pardon

Scripture 2 TIM 3:14-17 & 4:1-5

*Gloria Patri

*Apostles Creed

*Pastoral Prayer

Anthem

Announcements

WHITE WATER FUNERAL

NO YOUTH FELL

Offering, Response, Prayer

Hymn 217

Sermon

Prayer & Lord's Prayer

*Hymn 254

*Benediction

*Threefold Amen

*Postlude

Ruth

Genealogy of Js, Mt 1:1-6a

Bethlehem scene of story, archaeological finds revealed that Moab was indeed place where people went to from Beth. because of famine.
Beth means House of Bread

Orpah was not ungrateful, but was obedient.
It did not mean that she did not love mother-in-law, but did as mother-in-law wanted.

Naomi meant pleasant, Mara meant bitter (Ex. 15:23)

Gleaning, (Lev. 19:9-10, 23:22)

Generousness of Boaz is generousness to foreigners, (Jer 7:5-7, Zech. 7:9-10)

This also has a place in the law, (Ex. 22:21, 23:9, Deut. 24:19-22)

Moabites were enemies of Israelites

The concern of Boaz for Ruth & her reputation

Naomi is the scheming mother-in-law

Boaz and Levirate marriage, Deut. 25:5-10

This book is sybolic parallel to Christ.
Boaz is a type of Christ, Ruth stands for the believer. Boaz paid the price to redeem his beloved, so did Js.

Also this shows God's plan for mankind.
Even though the Messiah was to come from Davids royal line, a foreigger was ~~his~~ the great-grand-mother of David.